IN THE CLAIMS:

Please **amend claims 1, 4, 8, and 11** as follows:

1. (*Currently amended*) A method of allocating bandwidth capacity for data frames transmitted over a SONET/SDH ring, comprising the steps of:

subdividing a portion of the data frames comprising a SONET/SDH ~~ring transmission~~ layer into ~~one~~ two or more logical ~~frames~~ channels, each logical ~~frame~~ channel having associated therewith a predetermined bandwidth capacity;

assigning a protection mechanism to each logical ~~frame~~ channel; and

monitoring the SONET/SDH ring transmission to determine protection mechanisms associated with each logical ~~frame~~ channel.

2. (*Original*) The method of claim **1** wherein the data frames comprise a plurality of STS level one frames.

3. (*Original*) The method of claim **2** wherein the protection mechanism comprises one of a layer 1 SONET protection mechanism and a layer 2 protection mechanism.

4. (*Currently amended*) The method of claim **3** wherein, if the protection mechanism assigned to a *particular* logical ~~frame~~ channel is not layer 1, the bandwidth capacity for ~~that~~ the particular

logical ~~ring~~ <u>channel</u> is allocated among three or more nodes comprising the SONET ring.

5. (*Original*) The method of claim **3** wherein the layer 1 protection mechanism comprises a bidirectional line switched ring protection mechanism.

6. (*Original*) The method of claim **3** wherein the layer 1 protection mechanism comprises a unidirectional path switched ring protection mechanism.

7. (*Original*) The method of claim **3** wherein the layer 2 protection mechanism comprises at least one of: an Ethernet protection mechanism, an asynchronous transport mode protection mechanism, or a time division multiplexing protection mechanism.

8. (*Currently amended*) A network node for use in a SONET/SDH ring, comprising:

a first circuit configured to subdivide a portion of data frames comprising a SONET/<u>SDH</u> ~~ring transmission~~ <u>layer</u> into ~~one~~ <u>two</u> or more logical ~~frames~~ <u>channels</u>, each logical ~~frame~~ <u>channel</u> having associated therewith a predetermined bandwidth capacity;

a second circuit configured to assign a protection mechanism corresponding to a SONET/<u>SDH</u> protection level to each logical ~~frame~~ <u>channel</u>; and

a third circuit operable to monitor the SONET/SDH ~~ring transmission~~ layer to determine protection mechanisms associated with each logical ~~frame~~ channel.

9. (*Original*) The network node of claim **8** wherein the data frames comprise a plurality of STS level one frames.

10. (*Original*) The network node of claim **9** wherein the protection mechanism comprises one of a layer 1 SONET protection mechanism and a layer 2 protection mechanism.

11. (*Currently amended*) The method of claim **10** wherein, if the protection mechanism assigned to a particular logical ~~frame~~ channel is not layer 1, the bandwidth capacity for ~~that~~ the particular logical ~~ring~~ channel is allocated among three or more nodes comprising the SONET ring.

12. (*Original*) The method of claim **10** wherein the layer 1 protection mechanism comprises a bidirectional line switched ring protection mechanism.

13. (*Original*) The method of claim **10** wherein the layer 1 protection mechanism comprises a unidirectional path switched ring protection mechanism.

14. (*Original*) The method of claim **10** wherein the layer 2 protection mechanism comprises at least one of: an Ethernet protection mechanism, an asynchronous transport mode protection mechanism, or a time division multiplexing protection mechanism.

15. (*Original*) The network node of claim **8** wherein the data frames comprise a plurality of VT-1/5 level frames.

16. (*New*) The network node. of claim **2** wherein the data frames comprise a plurality of non-contiguous STS level one frames.

17. (*New*) The network node of claim **9** wherein the data frames comprise a plurality of non-contiguous STS level one frames.